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ABSTRACT

Nearly 37% (80 students) of the 219 entering, first-time freshmen, who were enrolled in second-level (requiring high school level skills) developmental reading and composition courses at the Community College of Allegheny County, were block-enrolled into a social science/history elective, "Man, Time, and Social Change." The same group of students shared classes, teachers, and subjects in order to (1) focus the student's classroom work to obtain maximum learning impact and (2) establish a strong, first-term student orientation to the institution and to their individual programs. In the social science course, using a workbook, classroom lectures, discussions, and films, the students delineated relationships between social events. Blocking the composition course with the others gave the students' writing assignments specific direction in both form and content. The design of "Advanced Reading and Study" complemented the other courses in its integration of the teaching of reading and study skills. Experimental and control populations were compared in terms of placement scores, majors, academic success, retention, and evaluation of the college experience. Project success was evidenced by a higher percentage of A's and B's, an increase in retention, and a greater satisfaction with their majors and the college among the blocked group. Students who felt unfairly placed in developmental courses were given special attention. (AYC)

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THE TEACHING OF HISTORY TO DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS:

A BLOCK PROJECT

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This project involved the block-scheduling of three courses for entering, first-time, developmental, freshmen students at the Allegheny Campus of the Community College of Allegheny County.

The courses involved in this block project were:
Basic Principles of Composition
Advanced Reading and Study
Man, Time, and Social Change

Community College of Allegheny Courty
Allegheny Campus

Spring, 1979

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In the Fall term, 1978, 2,203 students had their first college experience at the Allegheny Campus of the Community College of Allegheny County. Fifty-two percent (1,145) of these students enrolled on a full-time basis. Of these full-time students, sixty-two percent (710) were enrolled in developmental English and/or reading classes.* Nearly sixty-two percent (437) of these full-time developmental students were enrolled in the first-level developmental courses. These students were at a pre-high school skill level and not permitted to enroll in college-level work. Thirty-six percent (256) of these full-time developmental students were enrolled in second-level developmental courses. These students were at a high school skill level and were permitted to enroll only in those courses specified as appropriate by the Developmental Education Committee.** It is this last group with which our study is concerned. More specifically, this blocking project concerned only those students who in the Fall term were enrolled in both Basic Principles of Composition and Advanced Reading and Study. These students comprised nearly thirty-one percent (219) of the full-time students enrolled in developmental English and reading.

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*Allegheny Campus has a developmental English and reading program for students who apply to the College and whose placement scores are below college level. A score of less than 29 on the English Cooperative Test results in the placement of the student in Structure of American English. A score between 29 and 41 results in student placement into the Basic Principles of Composition course. Nelson-Denny Comprehension scores of less than 9.8 result in student placement into College Study Skills and College Reading. A Nelson-Denny Comprehension score between 9.8 and 12.8 results in student placement into the Advanced Reading and Study course. See Appendix A for a breakdown of first-time, freshman placement.

**This faculty-administrator-student committee has published a list of courses appropriate for each developmental level. See Appendix B.

Description of the Experimental Population

For the purposes of our experiment, nearly thirty-seven percent (80) of the 219 students enrolled in both second level English and reading were block-enrolled into a social science (history) elective, Man, Time, and Social Change. Block enrollment here meant that the same group of students would share classes, teachers, and subjects.*

The students enrolled in the blocked courses were early applicants to the Allegheny Campus; their placement was based on admissions tests administered in May - June, 1978. 125 students whose scores qualified them for blocking were invited to the first day of student orientation on July 10, 1978. At this orientation, chaired by Dr. Betsy McHugh, Director of Curriculum Development, the faculty explained their individual courses and the block program. Nearly all of the eventually-enrolled eighty students attended this orientation. The discrepancy between those invited and those enrolled may be explained by the failure of students to attend the orientation. Enrollment in the block project was optional. Although the English and reading courses were required of the students, they could not be required to enroll in the history elective. The block students were later to adjudge this orientation/registration experience "helpful".

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*The block scheduling concept was first utilized at Allegheny Campus by Dr. Betsy McHugh and three faculty, Jean Aston (English), Robert McCarthy (Mathematics), and Joan Saroff (Reading), in the Fall, 1977, when second level English and reading courses were combined with second level developmental mathematics (Fundamentals of Algebra and Geometry) and a psychology elective, Human Behavior. Human Behavior is a course focused on "the development of the integrated personality, the influence of personal, social and cultural factors as well as techniques of therapy." The techniques of learning counseling were an important part of this block project. Further information can be obtained from "A Report on Project Block: Fall Term 1977 and a Follow-Up Study Spring 1978." This report and additional information can be obtained from Dr. Betsy McHugh, Director of Curriculum Development, Allegheny Campus, 808 Ridge Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15212.

As early applicants to the college, the block students were a relatively homogeneous group. Thirty-six percent (29) of the group were male, sixty-four percent (51) were female. The group was young (mean age was 18.5), single (97%), living at home with their parents (92%), and June, 1978, high school graduates. All but two of the students had high school diplomas. These two exceptions had G.E.D.'s. Sixty-five percent (52) of the students were receiving no financial aid and seventy percent (56) were planning on transferring to a four-year institution upon completion of their associate's degree. An additional fourteen percent (11) were planning on transferring before the associate's degree.

Block students were drawn from widely-divergent areas of Allegheny County. The city and South Hills each provided thirty percent (24) of the population. Sixteen percent (13) were from the North Hills, fourteen percent (11) from the East Hills, and ten percent (8) from the Western parts of the county. In view of the lack of financial aid and the distance these students travelled to school (nearly one-half travelled between six and ten miles, an additional one-quarter in excess of eleven miles), part-time work and access to a car were important concerns. Thirty percent (24) of the students owned a car and an additional twenty-eight percent (22) had access to one. Two-thirds of the students were working at the beginning of the term, averaging 23 hours a week. By the end of the term, this number had increased to seventy-two percent (58) of the group, working an average of 31 hours a week.

Low tuition was a major factor in bringing these students to the campus. Only twenty-five percent (20) of the students indicated a "major concern" over their ability to finance their college education, fully one-third (26) indicated that this was a matter of no concern. Working long

hours at a part-time job, at least partially to support a car, and not on financial aid, these students received considerable support from their parents (support extending at least to room and board). When asked to indicate their parents' estimated 1977 income, forty-six percent (37) listed this below $15,000, another thirty-nine percent (31) indicated that it fell between $15,000 and $30,000, and a full fifteen percent (12) estimated it in excess of $30,000.

None of the students' parents had graduate degrees. Fifteen percent (12) of the fathers had finished college and only eight percent (7) of the mothers. Thirty-eight percent (30) of the fathers and sixty percent (48) of the mothers were high school graduates. One-half of the mothers (40) were listed as full-time homemakers and one-half of the fathers were owners of small businesses, salesmen, or involved in the skilled trades. The only substantial professional occupation represented among the fathers was that of engineer (nine fathers were in this category).

When questioned regarding their reasons for coming to college, the students assigned the following priorities to the listed motivations.

priorities	motivations
1	to be able to get a better job
2	to learn more about things that interest me
3	to gain a general education
4	to be able to make more money
5	to meet new and interesting people
6	to prepare for graduate school
7	my parents wanted me to come
8	I wanted to get away from home
9	I could not find a job
10	there was nothing better to do

When asked why they had chosen Allegheny Campus over other institutions in the area, the students assigned the following priorities to provided rationale. All of these should be viewed within the context of low tuition

-- an obvious first rationale.

priorities	rationale
1	this college has a good academic reputation
2	wanted to live at home
3	special programs offered here
4	my guidance counselor advised me
5	a former student advised me
6	I was not accepted anywhere else
7	my teacher advised me
8	my relatives wanted me to come here
9	friend's suggestion
10	college representative recruited me

Student success rests, in part, upon self-image. The block students were asked to assess a list of traits, to determine whether they possessed them in above average, average, or below average amounts. Their choices reflect importantly upon the group's progress. Nearly two-thirds (48) felt they were above average in "understanding others," the rest felt they were at least average in this trait. The group also felt it was at least average in "academic ability" and "cheerfulness". The group was evenly divided between average and above average in its "drive to achieve", with only seven percent (5) students assessing themselves below average in this characteristic. The group rated itself high in "physical attractiveness" and higher in "social self-confidence" than "intellectual self-confidence". It found itself average in "writing ability," but below average in mechanical and artistic abilities.

These results are verified by the students' choices of events of personal importance to them. Rejected by the students were such eventualities as "influencing the political structure," "making theoretical contributions in science," "writing original works," "creating artistic work," and becoming "accomplished in one of the performing arts". At the top of the list in personal importance were such potential events as "raising a family," "being well off financially," "being successful in my own business," and "helping others in difficulty". Of moderate importance were such eventualities as "becoming an authority in my field," "obtaining recognition from

colleagues for contributions in my field," "influencing social values," and "developing a meaningful philosophy of life".

When all is considered, the block students were young adults; settled for the moment, less than one-half felt there was a chance that they might change majors or career choices. Nearly one-half felt they would require vocational or personal counseling in the future or get married while in college. Almost all felt they would make at least a "B" average in college, would not transfer before graduation, would achieve a bachelor's degree, would not drop out of college either temporarily or permanently, would work part-time during college, and would find a job upon completion of college.

The Components of the Block Project (see also Appendices E and F)

The purposes of the block project were two-fold: (1) to focus the student's classroom work in order to obtain maximum learning impact and (2) to establish a strong, first-term student orientation to the institution and their individual programs. Our measure of the first purpose is student success and the second purpose is measured by retention or registration for the second term. During the same term that these eighty students were enrolled in the block project, an additional 139 students with comparable skill levels attended the college for the first time and were not enrolled in the block project. We shall use this group as a control for measuring relative success and retention in the block project.

The substantive focus of the block was derived from the Man, Time, and Social Change course. This course is a college-level, transferrable introduction to the historical social sciences. It is listed as a history course and taught by the history department. It derives its instructional focus

from the importance of paradigmatic understandings in interpreting the human past, present, and future and in determining the individual's position in the social context.

Through a workbook, classroom lectures, discussions, and films, the student is encouraged to delineate the relationships between social events, be these actual cause and effect relationships or analytical comparisons. The student is led from an elementary consideration of system, model, and paradigm, to a specification of traditional, industrial, and post-industrial paradigms, to an in-depth analysis of one historical community's past, present, and future (the New England town), to techniques of individual and social planning, and, finally, to an extensive summary of agents of change in the human past, present, and future. This course is purposefully abstract and generalizing, requiring the student to develop both linear and multi-linear models, to draw out future scenarios, and to construct an elaborate solution tree outlining change in a past society. A variety of testing techniques are used to ensure student retention of a broad range of conceptual information. During the course of the semester, the student described four cause-and-effect relationships (with respect to past innovations), participated in a Delphi experiment regarding the social future, constructed two models of social interaction, responded to one essay examination based on student-generated essay questions, developed a solution tree and a scenario, wrote an essay comparing two films (which were future scenarios), and completed four multiple-choice examinations. There were sixteen major assignments in all.*

*Further specification of the substance of this course and its requirements appear in the workbook. For further information, contact J. Holmberg, Department of History, Allegheny Campus, 808 Ridge Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15212.

Basic Principles of Composition is a college-credited developmental English course that is transferrable to most of the colleges and universities in the western Pennsylvania area. Students are enrolled in the course either by placement test or by successful completion of a lower-level, non-credit English course that has as its goal the elimination of gross non-standard forms from the students' written sentences. The focus of Basic Principles of Composition is on writing paragraphs and short expository essays with some review of sentence skills.

The blocking of the composition course with the history and reading course gave specific direction to instruction in both form and content of the writing assignments. For example, students had instruction and practice in writing reports and summaries in the composition course when they were assigned a book report and summaries in their reading course, and they practiced responses to essay exam topics in preparation for a history exam. In addition, the essays written for the composition course grade, as well as ungraded in-class writing assignments, included either content directly from their history course or were on topics requiring them to do a kind of thinking parallel to that in the history course. For example, in one assignment they were asked to project themselves ten years into the future in a chosen work situation and then to explain how they got there. Whenever possible, analogies and examples for rhetorical explanations were drawn from the other courses in the block project.

Advanced Reading and Study was designed to carefully integrate the teaching of reading and study skills. Emphasis was placed on increasing students' proficiency in extracting, analyzing, and remembering information from college texts. The format of the class varied from lecture, large

and small group instruction, to individualized laboratory practice. The content of Man, Time, and Social Change served as a focal point for the practical application of reading and study skills. In weekly, small group sessions, the students examined the relationship between the text material and class lectures. Lecture and text notes were synthesized by: restating main ideas, examining supporting details, perceiving relationships and developing new insights. Patterns of organization were utilized to develop study questions.

Students had the opportunity to interact with one another to answer and evaluate their own questions. By receiving periodic feedback on their progress in the Man, Time, and Social Change course, the students were able to appraise their learning skills and adjust their behavior accordingly. Throughout the term, the instructor observed the students' increased proficiency in the use of their reading skills and the learning process.

Comparisons between the Experimental and Control Populations

Appendix C reviews the placement scores on both the English Cooperative Test and the Nelson-Denny Vocabulary and Comprehension Reading Test for both the eighty students enrolled in the block project and those 139 students who were qualified by skill level for the block project but elected instead to select their courses through the normal advisement/registration procedures. While there are some minor differences between the two groups, these are not statistically significant.

Appendix D reviews the majors chosen by both groups of students. The major difference appears to be an overrepresentation of social technologies and formal transfer majors in the block project and an overrepresentation of business and health technologies majors in the control group. The importance of this variation is less when we consider that students were invited

to participate in the block project without regard to major and that these students were all developmental in their skill levels and, thus, formally, excluded from taking introductory courses in their specific majors.

Student Success in the Experimental and Control Populations

Table 1 reveals that there were important differences in the grades achieved by block students when compared to those of the control group. Not only were substantially more "A's" and "B's" achieved by block students in the blocked courses (English, reading, and history), but in the mathematics course, which was not blocked. There were substantially fewer failures in all courses as well. Finally, we should note that the average semester Q.P.A. for the block students was a full one-half of a grade point higher than that of the control students. Let us examine this increased success in some detail.

TABLE 1

Summary of Block and Control Student Grades
(percentage)

Courses:	Grades: A	B	C	D	F	I	W	Totals	Average grade
English									
Block	6 (8)	31 (39)	17 (21)	7 (9)	10 (12)	1 (1)	8 (10)	80	2.23
Control	17 (12)	37 (27)	32 (23)	13 (9)	26 (19)	5 (4)	9 (6)	139	2.05
Reading									
Block	17 (21)	36 (45)	13 (16)	3 (4)	5 (6)	0 (0)	6 (8)	80	2.77
Control	24 (17)	48 (35)	27 (19)	12 (9)	20 (14)	2 (2)	6 (4)	139	2.45
Soc. Sci.									
Block	22 (25)	33 (38)	14 (16)	4 (5)	5 (6)	2 (2)	7 (8)	80	2.81
Control	6 (10)	12 (19)	19 (31)	8 (13)	5 (8)	5 (8)	7 (11)	62	2.12
Mathematics									
Block	17 (23)	22 (29)	10 (13)	6 (8)	11 (15)	1 (1)	8 (11)	75	2.42
Control	22 (19)	24 (21)	30 (26)	10 (8)	24 (21)	0 (0)	6 (5)	116	2.09

As Table 1 indicates, not only did the blocked English students achieve a higher percentage of "A's" and "B's" (47%) than the control group (39%), a smaller percentage (21%) of the blocked students received "D's" and "F's" than did those in the control group (28%). In addition, the average English grade of the blocked student (2.23) was higher than the average English grade of the student enrolled in the first level reading sequence (1.85), the student enrolled in no reading course (2.12), or all students enrolled in Basic Principles of Composition (2.06).

The blocked reading student achieved a higher average reading grade (2.77) than the reading student enrolled in the first level English course (2.23), the reading student enrolled in no English course (2.58), and all students enrolled in Advanced Reading and Study (2.69). The block student's average grade was exceeded only by those students enrolled also in English 1 (3.16).

The blocked social science student achieved a higher average grade (2.81) than the unblocked social science student (2.12). A major cause of this is apparent. The unblocked social science student (62 out of the 139 control students) in eighty-seven percent (54) of the cases managed to enroll in social sciences courses above their skill level. Sixty-three percent (34) of these exceptions were Introduction to Psychology. The average grade attained in this course was 2.25. The second most popular exception was U.S. History 1. Thirteen percent (7) of the students took U.S. History 1 for an average grade of 1.2.

Ninety-four percent (75) of the blocked students took a mathematics course for an average grade of 2.42. Eighty-four percent (116) of the control group took a mathematics course for an average grade of 2.09. The mathematics courses the two groups took were roughly comparable, with

a little over three-fourths of each group in developmental mathematics.

Although this is not explicit in Table 1, it should be specified that the semester Q.P.A. for the block student was 2.71, the semester Q.P.A. for the control group student was 2.20 on the average (based on the calculation that A = 4.0).

In addition to these differences, student success within the block was highly correlated. In ninety-four percent (75) of the cases, at least two of the three grades in the blocked courses were in agreement. In thirty-five percent (28) of the cases the grades received in all three blocked courses were in agreement. This agreement included three students with "A", fourteen students with "B", one student with "C", two students with "F", and eight students with "W". In fifty-nine percent (47) of the cases, there was grade agreement in two of the blocked courses. This agreement included twelve students with "A", nineteen students with "B", twelve students with "C", two students with "D", and two students with "F". In only six percent (5) of the cases was there substantial disagreement in the grades assigned to an individual student within the block. In all cases, the students had trouble with the English course. Three of these five students received "F" in English, one received an "I", and one withdrew.

It should be noted that while block faculty shared assessments of student progress within their specific course, there was no effort to coordinate the assignment of final grades. Almost without exception, students who withdrew from one block course withdrew from all courses for the semester. Two of the three students who received all "A's" in the block courses also achieved an "A" in their mathematics course to make a 4.0 Q.P.A. for the semester. None of the control group achieved a 4.0 Q.P.A. for the semester.

Student Retention in the Experimental and Control Populations

There was a significant increase in retention of students enrolled in the block project over those enrolled in the control group. Table 2 summarizes this finding.

TABLE 2

Summary of Block and Control Student Retention

	Retention	Attrition	Totals
Block	69 (86.25%)	11 (13.75%)	80
Control	94 (67.63%)	45 (32.37%)	139
Totals	163 (74.4%)	56 (25.6%)	219

The remainder of this report will be devoted to examining this increased retention and to measuring the relationship between retention and student success in the first semester, as well as elaborating the relationship between retention and student perceptions of the blocking experience as their initial contact with the College.

Table 3 shows a clear relationship between student retention and success within the block. The only students to withdraw from the College in the blocked group were those who achieved less than a .5 Q.P.A. in the Fall term. Included among these eleven students were

1. A woman student who appeared on the block rosters throughout the semester, but never appeared in class.
2. A late male registrant who, it was discovered, had a previous, very unsuccessful semester at another campus within the College (receiving in that semester 2 "D's", 1 "F", and 1 "W") and who, it was determined late, was below the skill levels required for block enrollment. He was not enrolled in the English course in the block.
3. A male student who attended only sporadically throughout the semester, turning in few of his assignments, and, finally, not coming to class at all.

4. Three female students who could not perform college level work.
5. Five female students who stopped attending classes during the semester after informing the faculty of home and health problems.

TABLE 3

Retention/Attrition of Block and Control Students : Fall, 1978 to Spring, 1979 by Q.P.A.

Semester Q.P.A.	Block : Retention	Attrition	Control: Retention	Attrition
3.5 - 4.0	14 (20.3)	0	8 (9.5)	0
3.0 - 3.49	18 (26.9)	0	21 (22.3)	7 (15.6)
2.5 - 2.99	15 (21.7)	0	20 (21.3)	1 (2.22)
2.0 - 2.49	11 (15.9)	0	20 (21.3)	3 (6.67)
1.5 - 1.99	5 (7.2)	0	9 (9.6)	3 (6.67)
1.0 - 1.49	3 (4.3)	0	10 (10.6)	6 (13.3)
.5 - .99	1 (1.4)	0	2 (2.1)	1 (2.22)
.01 - .49	1 (1.4)	3 (27.3)	2 (2.1)	5 (11.1)
0	1 (1.4)	8 (72.7)	0 (0.0)	19 (42.2)
Totals	69	11	94	45

Table 4 examines the placement scores of non-returning students. The mean English Cooperative score for non-returning block students was 30.6. The mean score for non-returning control students was 33.7. The mean Nelson-Denny Comprehension score for non-returning block students was 9.95. The mean Nelson-Denny Comprehension score for

non-returning control students was 10.87. In other words, those students in the block project who did not enroll for the Spring term were clearly handicapped in writing and reading skills. Most of these had recognized these limitations by withdrawing from the block before the end of the Fall semester. In both reading and writing skills, the non-returning control student was superior to the block student. Attrition from the control group is less clearly related either to first semester success or reading and writing skills as measured by the placement exams.

TABLE 4

Placement Scores for Non-returning Students

English Cooperative Scores			Nelson-Denny Scores				
	Block	Control		Comprehension		Vocabulary	
				Block	Control	Block	Control
25	0	1					
26	1	2					
27	1	3	7.0 - 7.9	1	0	0	0
28	0	3					
29	1	2	8.0 - 8.9	1	1	1	6
30	2	3					
31	1	2	9.0 - 9.9	3	4	2	6
32	2	2					
33	1	2	10.0 -10.9	5	11	1	4
34	0	1					
35	1	1	11.0 -11.9	1	9	3	5
36	0	1					
37	0	2	12.0 -12.9	0	0	2	6
38	0	2					
39	0	1	13.0 -13.9	0	0	1	0
Unknown	1	19					
	11	45	Unknown	1	19	1	19
				11	45	11	45
mean =	30.6	33.7					
			mean =	9.95	10.87	9.84	10.43

Finally, the non-returning block student enrolled in only four courses beyond the blocked courses and mathematics. These included one each in Afro-American History 1, Introduction to Psychology, Business Organization, and Typing 2. In these courses, they received two "F's", one "I" and one "W". The non-returning control group student enrolled in thirty-one courses in

addition to developmental English, reading, and mathematics. They were ineligible, by placement scores, to enroll in seventy-one percent (22) of these courses. In these courses they received three "A's", three "B's", seven "C's", four "D's", 22 "F's", one "I", and ten "W's". The block students were actively discouraged from filling their first-term schedule with a variety of elective courses. On the other hand, the student in the control group was lost in the registration process, poorly advised, and signed up for a variety of courses for which he or she was ineligible. A recent article by John E. Roueche in the Community and Junior College Journal (September 1978) points out the hazards in this notion that students can "simultaneously be enrolled in an intensive-care unit and yet compete in the mile run."

Student Evaluation of the Blocking Experience

We know that student success and retention are improved through the blocking experience, yet it remains to explore the students' perceptions of this first college semester.

TABLE 5

Students' Perceptions of Reading/Writing Skills

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Totals
Reading	6 (10)	38 (63)	15 (25)	1 (2)	60
Writing	4 (7)	37 (62)	18 (30)	1 (2)	60
Totals	10 (8)	75 (62)	33 (28)	2 (2)	

When asked to assess their own writing and reading abilities, two-thirds of the way through the semester, a majority of the sixty students responding

described their combined reading and writing abilities as "good". We have reviewed the College's perception of the students' abilities in Appendix C. These students were all pre-college in skill development, all described at high school skill levels.

As student perception of ability was considered to be an integral part of any student evaluation of the blocking experience, a screening question was asked of the students. This question was ... "Looking back on this semester, I feel I was ___ fairly ___ unfairly placed into developmental English and reading courses." One-fourth of the students responding to the questionnaire (15) indicated that they had been "unfairly" placed into these developmental classes. The following evaluation results have been factored to reveal the influence of this item.

Question. "Do you feel more confident about your college skills after taking the block courses?"

TABLE 6

	More confident	The same	Less confident
Fairly placed	32	10	3
Unfairly placed	0	10	5
Totals	32	20	8

Fifty-three percent (32) of the students felt more confident about their skills after the blocking experience. One-third (20) perceived no change in their abilities. Thirteen percent (8) felt less confidence. The block was a positive experience, heavily influenced by the students' perception of placement.

Question. "Would you recommend this block scheduling experience to other students?"

TABLE 7

	Yes	No
Fairly placed	41	4
Unfairly placed	5	10
Totals	46	14

Seventy-six percent (46) of the students would recommend the block to future students. Again, this recommendation was heavily influenced by the students' perception of proper placement.

Question. "Would you recommend the teachers in the block to other students?"

TABLE 8

	Yes	No
Fairly placed	44	1
Unfairly placed	13	2
Totals	57	3

Negative feelings regarding the block, largely due to negative feelings regarding placement into developmental English and reading courses, did not extend into the students' assessments of the teachers involved in the blocking experience. This is an important fact as the growing literature on student retention emphasizes the importance of early positive experiences between faculty and students.

Question. "Knowing what I know now about the block, ___I would ___ I would not have taken these courses this Fall."

TABLE 9

	Would	Would not
Fairly placed	33	12
Unfairly placed	4	11
Totals	37	23

This was clearly the hardest question for the students to answer. A "yes" response might mean a repetition of the term's failures as well as successes. Even so, sixty-two percent (37) of the students responded in the affirmative. Again, perception of placement strongly influenced this decision.

Finally, let us consider how perception of placement might have affected the students' assessment of skills at this point in time.

TABLE 10

	Fairly placed	Unfairly placed	Totals
Reading skills?			
Excellent	3	3	6
Good	28	10	38
Fair	13	2	15
Poor	1	0	1
Writing skills?			
Excellent	2	2	4
Good	27	10	37
Fair	15	3	18
Poor	1	0	1

Table 10 indicates no major differences in perceived skills between those students who felt "fairly" and those who felt "unfairly" placed into the developmental English and reading classes.

The "Unfairly" Placed Student

Given their importance in the block evaluation, let us examine these "unfairly" placed students. These fifteen students were typical of the block group in placement scores. Table 11 reveals only small differences between the mean placement scores of these fifteen students and the mean placement scores of the whole block group. These students were at neither extreme of the placement score distribution for the block group.

Table 12 reveals that these students were not unusual in their achievements during the first semester when compared to the remainder of the block group. None of the three "straight A" block students, including those two who received semester Q.P.A.'s of 4.0 felt "unfairly" placed.

TABLE 11

Placement Scores of "Unfairly" Placed Students

English Cooperative Test		Nelson-Denny Comprehension Test	
Score	Number	Score	Number
30	3	9 - 9.9	1
33	2	10 - 10.9	7
34	2	11 - 11.9	4
35	2	12 - 12.9	2
36	1	Unknown	1
37	2		15
38	1	mean = 11.06	
39	1	block mean = 11.1	
Unknown	1		
	15		
mean = 34.36			
block mean = 33.08			

TABLE 12

Semester Q.P.A.'s for "Unfairly" Placed Students

1 - 1.62	1 - 2.44	3 - 3.00
	2 - 2.77	1 - 3.40
	1 - 2.81	2 - 3.46
		1 - 3.54
mean = 2.84		1 - 3.63
block mean = 2.71		1 - 3.65
		1 - 3.67

There being no difference in their placement and semester performance, let us consider what we know of the high school backgrounds of these "unfairly" placed students. Table 13 displays the ten average high school English grades

TABLE 13

Average H.S. English Grade	Rank in H.S. Graduating Class ---Percentage of class below them
1 - 1.75	38 out of 76 50%
1 - 2.25	52 out of 152 66%
1 - 2.33	47 out of 185 75%
1 - 2.61	82 out of 232 65%
3 - 3.00	101 out of 244 59%
1 - 3.08	169 out of 332 49%
1 - 3.13	251 out of 401 37%
1 - 3.25	469 out of 500 6%
	154 out of 668 77%
mean = 2.74	300 out of 875 66%
mean college Eng. grade = 2.53	average % below them = 55%

and ranks in graduating classes that we know. These data indicate that these were not exceptional students in high school who are feeling "cheated" at the college level. Whether we look at their placement scores, their performance during the blocked semester, or their high school past, there are no objective data to support the students' assessment of unfair placement in the block developmental courses. Moreover, this perception of "unfair" placement did not affect the decision to register for the Spring term. All but one of these "unfairly placed" students returned to the college in the Spring semester. We would speculate that the placement of these students in developmental courses was considered by them to be an obstacle in the way of an early achievement of their college career goals.

We have seen, however, that this unhappiness with their situation strongly affected their perception of the blocking experience. Their negative response to what so many found a positive experience underscores the need for greater attention to the explanation of student placement in developmental English and reading levels.

In order to facilitate a summary evaluation of the blocking experience, students were asked to rate block experiences on a scale from 1 to 5. This scale was as follows:

5 = Very helpful
4 = Helpful
3 = Somewhat helpful
2 = Not helpful
1 = A waste of time
0 = Does not apply

Table 14 reports these results. These results have been factored by the students' perception of placement.

TABLE 14

Student Evaluations of the Blocking Experience

	5 Very Helpful	4 Helpful	3 Somewhat Helpful	2 Not Helpful	1 Waste of Time	mean	Totals
1) Orientation Registration	*11/2	13/3	16/5	1/1	0/2	3.83/3.15	41/13
2) Academic advisement	16/5	18/3	8/2	1/2	2/3	4.00/3.33	45/15
3) Class on work values	2/1	10/3	23/7	5/3	2/1	3.12/3.00	42/15
4) Class on placement	13/4	15/6	16/3	1/1	0/1	3.89/3.73	45/15
5) Class on fin. aid	6/2	11/3	14/5	1/1	1/2	3.33/3.15	40/13
6) Having the same teachers	11/4	23/1	9/2	1/4	0/1	3.95/3.25	44/12
7) Having the same students	15/1	17/2	7/5	4/2	0/4	4.00/2.57	43/14
8) Having related assignments	18/3	19/1	4/1	2/7	2/3	4.09/2.60	45/15
9) Teachers know each other	18/3	15/1	10/3	2/4	0/2	4.09/2.92	45/13
10) Helpfulness of reading	10/0	14/2	11/3	4/5	5/5	3.45/2.13	44/15
11) Helpfulness of English	10/1	17/3	14/3	2/1	1/7	3.75/2.33	44/15
12) Relationship to college goals	5/1	10/0	17/1	3/1	3/8	3.29/1.64	38/11

*"Fairly placed"/"Unfairly placed"

Combined means on twelve items:

Orientation/registration = 3.67
Academic advisement = 3.83
Class on work values = 2.91
Class on placement = 3.80
Class on financial aid = 3.28
Having the same teachers = 3.84
Having the same students = 3.65
Having related assignments = 3.72
Teachers know each other = 3.69
Helpfulness of reading class = 3.12
Helpfulness of English class = 3.39
Relationlship of block to college goals= 2.92

First, examining only the factored means, items 6 through 9 related directly to the blocking rationale, the development of a positive learning situation through the provision of faculty, student, and learning reinforcement mechanisms. Students were constantly aware that their fellow students shared the same faculty, classes, and assignments. They were also aware that the faculty coordinated their instruction and shared evaluations of student progress. The students appreciated this interaction and, as the means indicate, clearly felt it "helpful". Again, those students who felt "unfairly"placed in English and reading viewed this situation only as "somewhat helpful".

Second, individual sessions in the Man, Time, and Social Change course were devoted to campus counseling (item 3), placement (item 4), and financial aid (item 5) services. While not rejected by the students, these block elements were less warmly received.

Third, the special orientation (item 1) and academic advisement (item 2) provided within the block context were welcomed by the students as "helpful" pathways through the bureaucratic maze of registration at Allegheny Campus.

Fourth, the students were asked to assess the helpfulness of the reading and English courses (items 10 and 11) to the block experience. In both cases, the students found these courses "helpful". Their reading class is evaluated as less helpful than the English course probably because students generally feel that reading is a more universal and available talent than writing.

Finally, the students assessed the relationship of the block to their college goals (item 12). Their lower assessment here rests upon the assumption that placement in developmental courses slows them down in their pursuit of a college program. If the block experience has been as successful as we suspect, the student assessment of the experience should

increase as they begin to pursue their specific program work.

Conclusions Regarding the Blocking Experience

While there are tentative conclusions throughout this report, four general observations are in order.

1. Student success is enhanced by the blocking experience. This enhancement occurs both in terms of increased grades and increased student awareness of the importance of reading and writing skills when these skills find immediate and reinforced application in a history course. As Table 1 indicates, this increased success takes the form of both higher grades and fewer failures.

2. Student retention is enhanced by the blocking experience. This enhancement occurs both in terms of continuing enrollment in the institution and through better student attendance throughout the semester. As Table 2 indicates, the rate of attrition from the block was less than one-half that experienced by the unblocked student population.

3. Students within the block experienced a positive first college semester in spite of the fact that they were developmental students with special skill handicaps. Nearly all reported that they had made friends among other block students and some revealed specific attachments to the block faculty. A few block students have enrolled in history courses in the Spring term in order to continue some of these relationships.

4. The block experience provides a student early warning system. The relatively high withdrawal rate and low failure rate revealed in Table 1 indicate that the block provides a constant and caring assessment of student progress during the first semester allowing a supported withdrawal from the semester rather than anonymous failures.

APPENDIX A
Fall, 1978, First-Time Student Population
Allegheny Campus

FULL TIME STUDENTS

	1st level English	2nd level English	Eng. 1	Other English	No English	Totals
1st level Reading	164 (14)	94 (8)	3 (.3)	7 (.6)	9 (.8)	277 (24)
2nd level Reading	33 (3)	219 (19)	27 (2)	2 (.2)	12 (1)	293 (26)
Other Reading	1 (.1)	4 (.3)	2 (.2)	0	0	7 (.6)
No Reading	18 (2)	109 (10)	315 (28)	6 (.5)	120 (11)	568 (50)
Totals	216 (19)	426 (37)	347 (30)	15 (1)	141 (12)	1145 (100)

PART TIME STUDENTS

	1st level English	2nd level English	Eng. 1	Other English	No English	Totals
1st level Reading	16 (2)	4 (.4)	1 (.1)	1 (.1)	57 (5)	79 (8)
2nd level Reading	4 (.4)	12 (1)	8 (.8)	0	13 (1)	37 (4)
Other Reading	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Reading	25 (3)	48 (4)	124 (12)	2 (.2)	743 (70)	942 (89)
Totals	45 (4)	64 (6)	133 (13)	3 (.3)	813 (77)	1058 (100)

APPENDIX B

Courses Approved for Enrollment by Developmental Students

Arts and Humanities

Community College Theatre
History of Art 1 and 2
Languages of Mankind
Mythology
Conversational French
Conversational German
Conversational Russian
Conversational Spanish
Conversational Italian
Introduction to Music
Applied Music Major
Ensemble Band
Ensemble Choir
Ensemble Orchestra
Class Piano 1 and 2
Color 1
Design 1
Drawing 1
Graphics 1
Ceramics 1
Jewelry Making 1
Sculpture 1
Photography 1
Painting 1

Social/Behavioral Sciences

Man, Time, and Social Change
Afro-American History 1
Human Behavior

Mathematics

Basic Metric System

Natural/Physical Sciences

Biological Science
Heredity, Evolution, Ecology
Introduction to Chemistry
Earth Science
Physical Science
Introduction to Geography
Science and Society
Death and Dying
Introduction to Physics

Business

Typewriting 1

Engineering

Engineering Seminar
Engineering Drawing

Developmental Courses for Student Placement

	--Reading--	--English--	--Mathematics--
1st Level:	College Study Skills College Reading	Structure of American English	Computation Fundamentals
2nd Level:	Advanced Reading and Study	Basic Principles of Composition	Fundamentals of Algebra and Geometry
	Advanced College Reading (a continuation of College Reading)		

APPENDIX C

Placement Scores for Block and Control Groups

English Cooperative Test Scores

	Block	Control
21	0	2
22	1	0
23	1	1
24	1	2
25	2	4
26	1	5
27	-	7
28	2	9
29	3	8
30	6	8
31	9	3
32	5	8
33	10	8
34	5	5
35	6	5
36	5	7
37	5	4
38	5	2
39	6	2
40	1	0
41	1	0
42	0	1
Unknown	4	48
	80	139
mean =	33.08	30.88
median =	33.0	32.0
mode =	33.0	28.0

Nelson-Denny Reading Test Scores

	Block	Control
Vocabulary		
7.0 - 7.9	1	0
8.0 - 8.9	3	9
9.0 - 9.9	9	28
10.0 - 10.9	17	10
11.0 - 11.9	27	13
12.0 - 12.9	15	31
13.0 - 13.9	6	5
Unknown	3	48
	80	139
mean =	11.2	11.03
Comprehension		
7.0 - 7.9	1	3
8.0 - 8.9	2	6
9.0 - 9.9	9	11
10.0 - 10.9	25	42
11.0 - 11.9	25	23
12.0 - 12.9	13	6
13.0 - 13.9	2	0
Unknown	3	48
	80	139
mean =	11.1	10.5

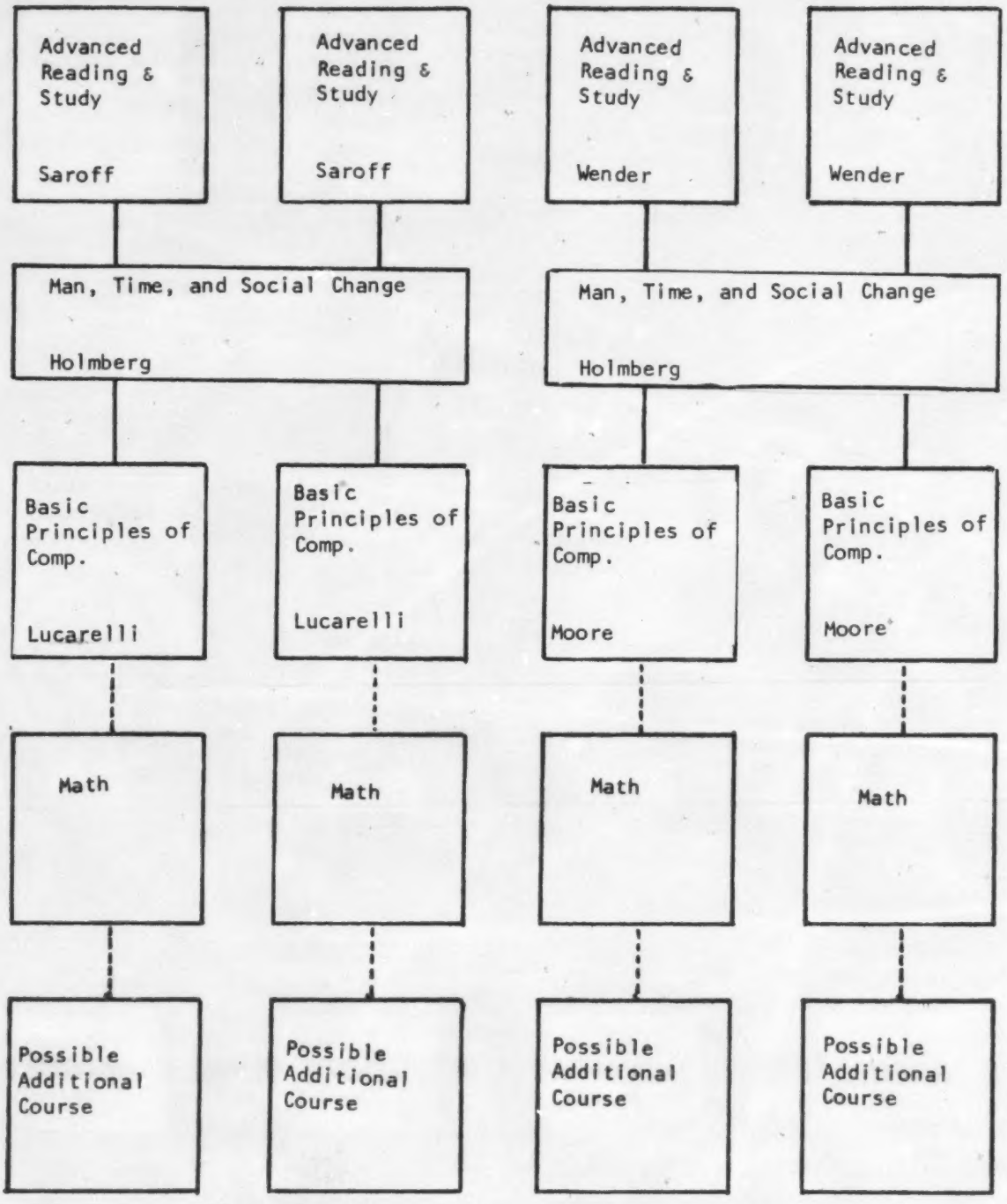
APPENDIX D

Majors of Block and Control Groups

Block Students		Majors		Control Students
9		BUSINESS TECHNOLOGIES - 24		15
(11.3%)	0	Business Data Processing	4	(10.8%)
	0	Executive Secretarial	4	
	1	Legal Secretarial	2	
	6	Retail Management	3	
	2	Secretarial Science	2	
2		ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGIES - 9		7
(3.5%)	0	Basic Engineering	1	(5.0%)
	1	Electronics Technology	3	
	1	Industrial Design	0	
	0	Structural Design	3	
18		HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES - 62		44
(22.5%)	3	Allied Health Reserves	10	(31.6%)
	1	Dietetic Technician	3	
	1	Emergency Medical Technician	5	
	1	Medical Assistant	2	
	3	Medical Laboratory Technician	7	
	0	Medical Records Technician	2	
	9	Nursing Reserves	12	
	0	Respiratory Therapists	3	
14		SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES - 23		9
(17.5%)	4	Corrections Administration	3	(6.5%)
	8	Pedology	4	
	2	Social Work Technician	2	
20		BUSINESS TRANSFER MAJORS - 62		42
(25.0%)	11	Accounting	10	(30.2%)
	5	Business Administration	8	
	2	Business Management	13	
	1	Computer Science	5	
	1	Marketing Management	6	
		GENERAL TRANSFER PROGRAMS - 39		22
17	0	Chemistry	1	(15.8%)
(21.3%)	2	Commercial Art	1	
	1	Biological Science	4	
	2	English	0	
	1	Fine Arts	0	
	4	Liberal Arts	7	
	3	Music	3	
	1	Physical Education	1	
	1	Psychology	0	
	1	Social Science	0	
	0	Speech and Theatre	1	
	1	Undecided	4	
Total = 80				Total = 139

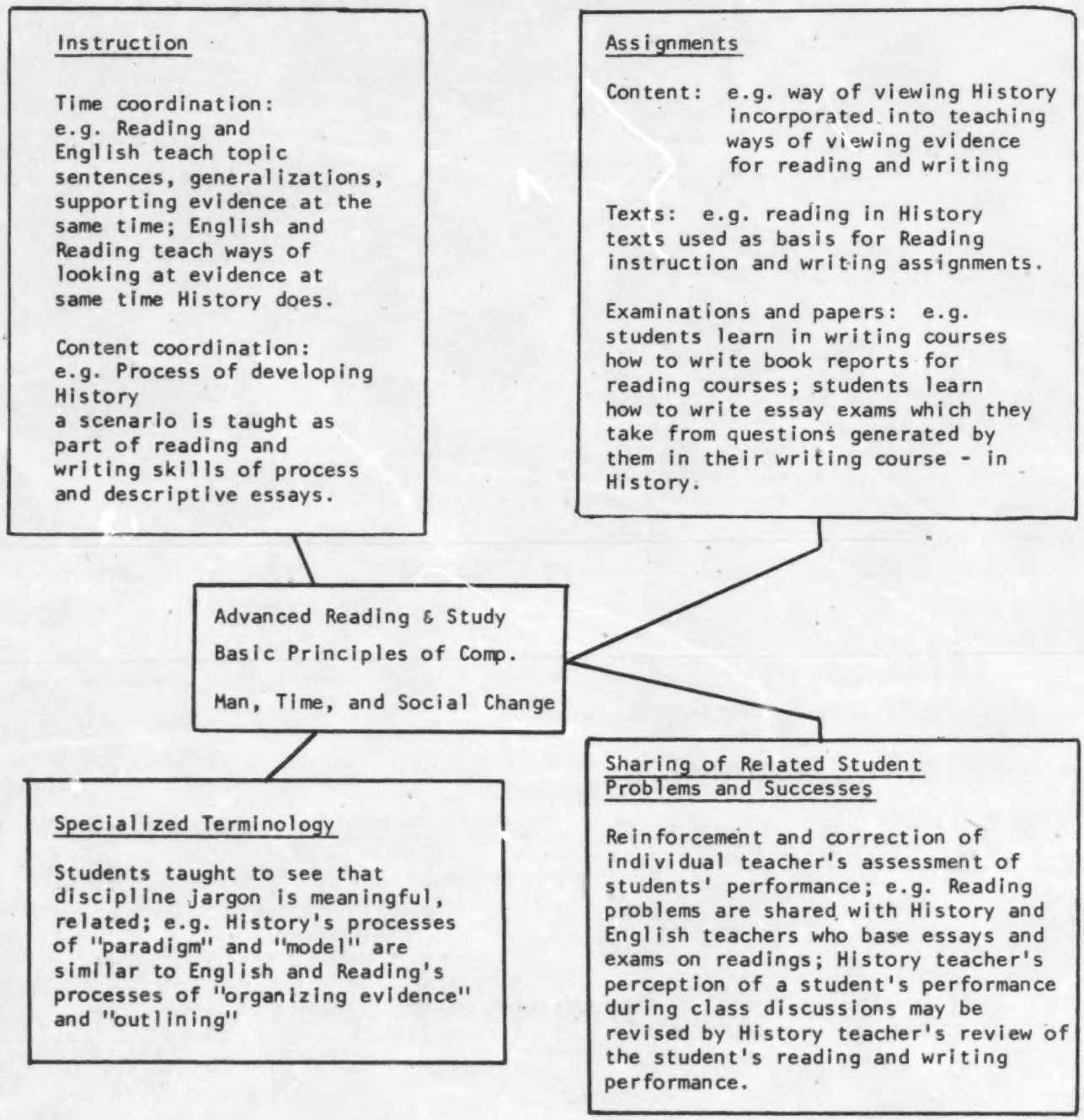
APPENDIX E

Sections for Student-Scheduling



APPENDIX F

Integration of Block Course Instruction


Instruction
Time coordination:
e.g. Reading and English teach topic sentences, generalizations, supporting evidence at the same time; English and Reading teach ways of looking at evidence at same time History does.
Content coordination:
e.g. Process of developing History
a scenario is taught as part of reading and writing skills of process and descriptive essays.
Assignments
Content: e.g. way of viewing History incorporated into teaching ways of viewing evidence for reading and writing
Texts: e.g. reading in History texts used as basis for Reading instruction and writing assignments.
Examinations and papers: e.g. students learn in writing courses how to write book reports for reading courses; students learn how to write essay exams which they take from questions generated by them in their writing course - in History.
Advanced Reading & Study
Basic Principles of Comp.
Man, Time, and Social Change
Specialized Terminology
Students taught to see that discipline jargon is meaningful, related; e.g. History's processes of "paradigm" and "model" are similar to English and Reading's processes of "organizing evidence" and "outlining"
Sharing of Related Student Problems and Successes
Reinforcement and correction of individual teacher's assessment of students' performance; e.g. Reading problems are shared with History and English teachers who base essays and exams on readings; History teacher's perception of a student's performance during class discussions may be revised by History teacher's review of the student's reading and writing performance.

THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED BY EXTENSIVE PLANNING BEFORE CLASSES BEGIN AND REGULAR, PERIODIC MEETINGS AMONG THE INSTRUCTORS DURING THE TERM.